

**Archibald Stuart to Thomas Jefferson, January 4, 1797,  
with Copy, The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve  
Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul  
Leicester Ford.**

**TO ARCHIBALD STUART<sup>1</sup>**

1 From the original in the possession of the Virginia Historical Society.

Monticello, Jan 4, 1797.

Dear Sir, —In answer to your favor of Dec. 31. & to the question whether adviseable to address the President on the subject of war against France, I shall speak explicitly, because I know I may do it safely to you. Such is the popularity, of the President that the people will support him in whatever he will do or will not do, without appealing to their own reason or to anything but their feelings toward him. His mind has been so long used to unlimited applause that it could not brook contradiction, or even advice offered unasked. To advise, when asked, he is very open. I have long thought therefore it was best for the republican interest to soothe him by flattering where they could approve his measures, & to be silent where they disapprove, that they may not render him desperate as to their affections, & entirely indifferent to their wishes, in short to lie on their oars while he remains at the helm, and let the bark drift as his will and a superintending providence shall direct. By his answer to the House of Representatives on the subject of the French war, & also by private information, it seems he is earnest that the war should be avoided, & to have the credit of leaving us in full peace. I think then it is best to leave him to his own movements, & not to risk the ruffling them by what he might deem an improper interference with the constituted authorities. The rather too because we do not hear of any movement in any other quarter concurrent with what you suggest, & because it would

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scarcely reach him before his departure from office. As to the President elect, there is reason to believe that he (Mr. Adams I mean) is detached from Hamilton, & there is a possibility he may swerve from his politics in a greater or less degree. Should the British faction attempt to urge him to the war by addresses of support with life & fortune, as may happen, it would then be adviseable to counteract their endeavors by dissuasive addresses. At this moment therefore, at our

distance from the scene of information & influence, I should think it most adviseable to be silent till we see what turn the new administration will take. At the same time I mix so little with the world, that my opinion merits less attention than anybody's else, and ought not to be weighed against your own good judgment. If therefore I have given it freely, it is because you have desired it, & not because I think it worth your notice.

My information from Philadelphia confirms the opinion I gave you as to the event of the election. Mr. Adams will have a majority of three votes with respect to myself, & whether Mr. Pinckney will have a few more or less than him seems uncertain. The votes of N.H. R. I. and Vermont had not come in, nor those of Georgia & the two Western states. You shall receive a gong by the first conveyance. It is but fair reciprocity to give me an opportunity of gratifying you sometimes, and to prove by accepting this, that my repeated intrusions on you have not been too troublesome. It is a great satisfaction to know that the object will be acceptable to you. With every wish for your happiness I am Dear Sir your affectionate friend & servt.